

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 1349

BEIRUT PLS PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BTRA, SY

SUBJ: CHECKLIST FOR AMERICAN BUSINESS VISITORS: MIDDLE EAST
AND NORTH AFRICA

REF: A. STATE A-855, 2/10/75; B. STATE 060016

1. SUMMARY: WE BELIEVE SUBJECT CHECKLIST AN EXCELLENT IDEA
AND AS REQUESTED REF A ARE PROVIDING BELOW OUR COMMENTS ON
GENERAL CHECKLIST AND OUR SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR VISITORS
SYRIA. WE WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING 20 COPIES OF
CHECKLIST WHEN IT IS ISSUED. END SUMMARY.

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2. PART ONE OF THE SUBJECT CHECKLIST (REF A) PROVIDES THE MAIN GENERAL GUIDANCE NECESSARY FOR BUSINESS VISITORS TO SYRIA. BELOW ARE OUR GENERAL COMMENTS ON PART ONE, FOLLOWED BY OUR SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR PART TWO CONCERNING SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR VISITORS TO SYRIA.

3. PART ONE: PAGE 3, NOTIFICATION: "....POSTS WILL NOT MAKE APPOINTMENTS FOR YOU UNTIL YOU ACTUALLY ARRIVE." THIS, WE BELIEVE, IS A BIT TOO STRICT. PERHAPS ADDING FOLLOWING LANGUAGE AT END WOULD BE MORE CORRECT: "....., UNLESS YOU CAN TELEPHONE OR CABLE AHEAD FROM A NEARBY AMERICAN EMBASSY TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN THE NEXT CITY TO BE VISITED AND CAN THEREFORE ASSURE YOUR ARRIVAL AND THE EXACT APPOINTMENTS FOR WHICH YOU REQUIRE ASSISTANCE."

PAGE 5, HLOCAL REPRESENTATION: "....NOR ARE BRANCH OFFICES USED TO ANY GREAT EXTENT." THIS CONFUSES US AS WE HAVE A CONTINUAL STREAM OF USEFUL VISITORS FROM BRANCH OFFICES OF AMERICAN FIRMS, PARTICULARLY THOSE LOCATED IN BEIRUT AND TEHRAN. IN THIS SENSE, BRACH OFFICES ARE USED AND ARE IMPORTANT. SUGGEST CLARIFICATION OF MEANING OF THIS PORTION OF CHECKLIST.

PAGES 6 AND 7: USEFUL PUBLICATIONS FROM COMMERCE: PLEASE SEND US TWO COPIES EACH OF "A BASIC GUIDE TO EXPORTING" AND "14 WAYS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE CAN HELP MAKE YOUR BUSINESS MORE PROFITABLZ."

4. PART TWO, SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR BUSINESS VISITORS TO SYRIA:

A. TRADE POLICY: THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC (SARG) HAS LIBERALIZED ITS TRADE POLICY IN THE PAST FZW YEARS AND TRADE PROCEDURES ARE MUCH MORE LIBERAL AND DIFFERENT FROM THOSE PRACTICTED PRIOR TO 1970. WHILE 70 PER CENT OF TRADE IS STILL CONDUCTED BY SARG STATE TRADING AGENCIES AND DIRECT PURCHASES BY SUCH AGENCIES OR GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES, THERE IS A GROWING AND ACTIVE PRIVATE SECTOR TRADE PARTICULARLY IN TOURISM AND CONSTRUCTION.

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RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF US-SYRIAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IN JUNE 1974 AND CHANGED SARG ECONOMIC POLICIES HAVE UNLEASHED A 12-YEAR-OLD PENT-UP DESIRE FOR AMERICAN EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES WHICH HERETOFORE HAVE NOT BEEN ENCOURAGED IN THE SYRIAN MARKET. SUCH GOODS AND SERVICES HAVE AN EXCELLENT REPUTATION HERE AND WE EXPECT AN UPSURGE IN PURCHASES FROM THE US AS OPPOSED TO SYRIA'S LEADING TRADING PARTNER NOW -- THE EEC, WITH ITS CLOSER LOCATION AND MORE RAPID

DELIVERY TIMES.

SYRIAN AGENTS ARE REQUIRED BY LAW FOR TRADE IN COMMODITIES AND EQUIPMENT. THIS LAW IS BASED ON ENCOURAGING SYRIAN BUSINESSMAN AS OPPOSED TO THIRD-COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES, PARTICULARLY FROM NEARBY LEBANON. TURN-KEY PLANT PROJECTS CAN BE NEGOTIATED DIRECTLY WITH THE SARG TENDER AUTHORITY (MINISTRY OR PARTICULAR STATE INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION), BUT MORE SUCCESS HAS BEEN EVIDENT SO FAR WHEN FOREIGN FIRM HAS LOCAL AGENT TO FOLLOW UP ON SUCH TENDERS. ANOTHER KEY ASPECT OF A LOCAL AGENT'S WORK IS TO OBTAIN ADVANCE INFORMATION ON UPCOMING TENDERS GIVEN SHORT BID AND DELIVERY DEADLINES INCLUDED IN MOST TENDERS WHEN THEY ARE FINALLY PUBLICLY ISSUED. SARG TENDERS TRADITIONALLY CALL FOR FIVE TO 10 PER CENT TENDER AND PERFORMANCE BONDS TO BE ESTABLISHED BETWEEN US FIRM'S AMERICAN BANK AND COMMERCIAL BANK OF SYRIA (CBS), THE SYRIAN STATE MONOPOLY BANK. CBS HAS CLOSE CORRESPONDENT RELATIONS WITH MANY LEADING US BANKS, BUT FOREIGN BANKS ARE NOT REPRESENTED IN ANY FORM IN SYRIA.

MOST EQUIPMENT AND COMMODITY TRADING IS DONE ON AN L/C CASH BASIS. TURN-KEY PROJECTS AND JOINT INVESTMENTS ARE INDIVIDUALLY NEGOTIATED AND WITHIN THE TERMS OF THESE INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTS PROVISIONS ARE MADE FOR MUTUAL SATISFACTION REGARDING WAGE AND LABOR PRACTICES, CURRENCY MOVEMENTS, PROFIT REPATRIATION, IMPORT/EXPORT AND CUSTOMS PROVISIONS, ETC. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS ON THE MOVE IN SYRIA AND THE BASIC GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE TOWARD CONTRACTS AND INVESTMENTS IS: "WE WANT OFFERS AND, IF THEY ARE ATTRACTIVE, WE CAN AGREE ON MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL CONTRACTS IN ANY FORM SO DESIRED."

B. LENGTH OF VISIT: SERIOUS BUSINESS VISITORS SHOULD
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ALLOW A MINIMUM OF FOUR WORKING DAYS IN DAMASCUS (FRIDAY IS A NON-WORKING DAY), GIVEN DIFFICULTIES IN MAKING APPOINTMENTS WITH OVERWORKED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. WHILE DAMASCUS IS THE CENTER OF COMMERCIAL DECISION-MAKING, SPECIALIZED SECTORS SUCH AS RAILWAY TRANSPORT AND COTTON REQUIRE VISITS TO NORTHERN SYRIAN CITY OF ALEPPO (SIX HOUR DRIVE FROM DAMASCUS, OR DAILY AIRCRAFT).

C. HOTELS: ARE EXTREMELY CROWDED AND CONFIRMED RESERVATIONS MAY BE "LOST" UPON ARRIVAL, OR VISITING FOREIGN GOVERNMENT DELEGATIONS MAY MEAN ROOM WILL BE TAKEN BACK AFTER OCCUPANCY. RECONFIRM RESERVATIONS REPEATEDLY PRIOR TO ARRIVAL, PARTICULARLY WITH TELEPHONE CALLS FROM BEIRUT, WHICH HAS BEEN TRADITIONAL GATEWAY FOR FOREIGN BUSINESS VISITORS TO SYRIA. HOTEL SPACE IS PARTICULARLY TIGHT

IN MAY-OCTOBER PERIOD WHEN MORE TOURISTS ARE IN SYRIA,
ARAB TOURISTS ARE IN DAMASCUS TO ESCAPE HEAT OF ARABIAN
PENINSUAL AND DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL FAIR IS ON DURING JULY
AND AUGUST.

D. VISAS: ALTHOUGH IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT VISAS BE
OBTAINED IN ADVANCE OF VISIT, SYRIAN VISAS CAN BE OBTAINED
AT LEBANESE/SYRIAN BORDER ON BEIRUT/DAMASCUS ROAD OR AT
DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. COMING FROM BEIRUT ALLOWS
VISITORS TO MAKE CALLS AHEAD FOR HOTELS, APPOINTMENTS AND
EMBASSY COMMERCIAL ASSISTANCE, RENT TAXIS FOR THREE-HOUR
DRIVE TO DAMASCUS AND RETURN TO BEIRUT IN THE EVENING
SHOULD HOTEL SPACE BE UNAVAILABLE IN DAMASCUS. COMMERCIAL
AIR TRAFFIC FOR PASSENGERS BETWEEN BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS
IS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE.
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